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Bulletin for Old Testament Studies in Africa (BOTSA) aims at being a forum for exchange of ideas and information about Old Testament studies in Africa. In brief articles *BOTSA* comments on pedagogical, methodological and research political questions related to Old Testament studies in Africa, and it also brings notices on research projects, teaching programs, books and conferences. The readers are encouraged to use it as a means of communication.

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Issue 19, November 2005

Editorial: This is the second last paper issue of BOTSA	1
<i>David Tuesday Adamo</i> : Decolonizing the teaching of the Old Testament in Africa	3
<i>Gosnell L. Yorke</i> : Conference report, Pietermaritzburg	11
<i>Jean-Bosco Matand Bulembat</i> : Conference report, Kinshasa	15
<i>Elelwani Bethuel Farisani</i> : Conference report, Philadelphia	18
Book reviews	20

This is the second last paper issue of BOTSA

It started back in 1996, with a *Newsletter on African Old Testament Scholarship*, a very modest publication, whose aim, it was argued, was to be a forum for exchange of ideas and information related to Old Testament studies in Africa. Then, in 2000, the newsletter was upgraded to a *Bulletin on Old Testament Studies in Africa* (BOTSA), with an international editorial board, and a fulltext web-edition in addition to the paper edition. However, the aim was still to be a forum for exchange of ideas and information related to Old Testament studies in Africa.

Now, after nearly ten years and – next year – twenty issues, the time is ripe for a radical change with regard to the publishing of this bulletin. The aim of BOTSA is still to be a forum for exchange of ideas and information related to Old Testament studies in Africa. But the means of creating this forum will have to change. Positively, due to the now quite general access to electronic communication, and negatively, due to the costs of printing and (not least) posting, BOTSA will from mid-2006 change from a biannually published paper edition (even with a fulltext

web-version of this paper edition) to a constantly upgraded web-edition. The last paper issue will be number 20 (May 2006), which will contain indexes for issues 1 (November 1996) to 20 (May 2006). BOTSA will from then be available on the web, and its material will be grouped in four:

- *News*: A main purpose of BOTSA has been and will continue to be its function as an instrument for exchange of news related to Old Testament studies in Africa, such as invitations to conferences, calls for papers, information about research projects, information about textbook projects, etc.
- *Conference reports*: Reports from conferences related to Old Testament studies in Africa have been a major characteristics of BOTSA, and this will continue.
- *Articles*: BOTSA will also continue publishing articles on pedagogical, methodological and research political questions related to Old Testament studies in Africa. The new format allows for longer articles than what has been the case till now, but brief comments will still be especially welcome.
- *Book reviews*: BOTSA has a tradition of reviewing books in its area, and this will continue.

It should here be emphasized that the quality and usefulness of BOTSA depends on the readership and the will of this readership to contribute. If BOTSA is going to continue, the editor still – and even more than previously – depends upon the readership, for news about research and conferences, reports from conferences, articles and notes, and book reviews. And “the readership”, that is you! Your colleagues in the field of Old Testament studies in Africa are very much interested in your ideas and meanings, your research and your conferences.

Readers of BOTSA who want to be informed – through an e-mail message – when new material is available in BOTSA, are kindly asked to send an e-mail to the editor, requesting to be on BOTSA’s mailing list: knut.holter@mhs.no.

Knut Holter
Editor

Decolonizing the teaching of the Old Testament in Africa

David Tuesday Adamo

This article is based on the premise that the way in which the Old Testament is taught in Africa should be different from the ways it is taught in Europe and America. Unfortunately, this is not the case in most tertiary institutions in Africa. In my own country, Nigeria, the Old Testament is still being taught in higher institutions the way it is taught in Europe and America. And, based on my experience from other universities and seminaries, I will tend to think that this is probably the case in most African universities. My examination of Old Testament curricula in some other universities in West Africa, East Africa and South Africa does not show any difference from the above. The purpose of this article is therefore to examine how to decolonize the teaching of the Old Testament in African higher institutions.¹

The colonization of the teaching of Old Testament in Africa

When the word colonization is used concerning Africa, one tends to think of the partition of Africa and the eventual physical conquest of the continent. This is not far from the truth because modern imperialism has something to do with market inequality among third world countries. This includes foreign aid as a weapon for colonization, debt domination, political repression, state terrorism, and the so-called globalization.²

Our concern in this section however, is the discussion of how even an academic discipline like Old Testament studies has been colonized. The purpose is not any outright condemnation of missionary activities but to point out some facts which indicate colonization. I would like to emphasize that whatever mistakes the early missionaries have made, God has used them to bless Africa. I am a witness to such blessing.

The Indian biblical scholar R.S Sugirtharajah has listed and discussed various marks of colonial biblical interpretation,³ and I will outline some of his points:

- Inculcation, that is, “the use of the Bible as a vehicle for inculcating European manners.”

- Encroachment, that is, “the introduction to the ‘other’ of alien values, under the guise of biblicization,” in order to repudiate the local culture which is considered incapable of transmitting Christian truths.
- Displacement, that is, the displacement of local culture.
- Analogies and implication, that is, the juxtaposition of biblical and secular history as a weapon against those who resisted colonial intervention. The biblical stories were read to justify the cruelty and suffering caused by violent invasion of the Europeans.
- The textualization of the Word of God, that is, the idea that no religious teaching was of any value except it is in written form. This is in order to discredit the oral tradition of the local people.
- The historicization of faith, that is, the affirmation of biblical religion as a historical faith.

My candid opinion is that the colonization of biblical studies began with the establishment of bible colleges, seminaries and universities in Africa, by the missionaries. During the early period, the lecturers in these institutions were missionaries from the Western world, and their methods of teaching were Western. Old Testament studies was taught from a Eurocentric perspective. In their enthusiasm to teach students how to communicate the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, they also taught Western culture. All students had to learn how to interpret the Christian scripture the way it was interpreted in the West. African culture and religion were relegated to the background and therefore were not really taught to the students.

I would like to illustrate this fact with my eight years’ experience in bible college and seminary in Nigeria between 1968 and 1977. Throughout these years, I cannot remember any courses on African culture and religion. The only attention African indigenous religion got had the purpose of showing how heathenistic and useless it is. By the time I graduated, I had learned to interpret the Bible the American way. I preached the Bible the American ways, and in fact, tried to talk, walk, eat, and do everything the American way. More importantly, I learned to condemn African culture and religion because I was taught that they were of no value. The Bible is read and interpreted in seminaries and universities in the tradition of Western scholarship. African universities as well as African seminaries have curricula that betray us as still being slaves to the tradition of Western biblical scholarship. In other words, in our interpretative mode, we are still colonized.

Most biblical scholars in Africa are trained in the West. By 1960, there were only six universities in the whole continent of Africa.⁴ Most of these did not offer postgraduate level training in theology or religious studies, that is why much of the training took place in Europe and America.⁵ And it is interesting to see that the overseas' training of African biblical intellectuals followed ecclesiastical lines (Catholic students go to Rome, Evangelicals to USA and Britain), and historical and politico-colonial lines (Great Britain, France, Belgium, and USA who are former colonial and neo-colonial masters).⁶

In fact, it is unfortunate that up till now I am not aware of any outstanding center for Old Testament studies to boast of in Black Africa. The bitter truth is that the training of African scholars in a context that is both culturally and scholarly non-African is gradually becoming a problem. A non-African colleague, Professor Knut Holter, points out these problems:

[...] it is increasingly being experienced as a problem that the training is given in a context that both culturally and scholarly is non-African. One result of this is that questions emerging from cultural and social concerns in Africa only to some extent are allowed into the interpretation of the OT. As a consequence, there is a gap between the needs of ordinary African Christians for modes of reading the OT, and the modes provided by scholars trained in the western tradition of biblical scholarship. Another result of the location of the training outside Africa is a feeling, at least in some cases, of inferiority vis-à-vis the massive western tradition.⁷

The majority of the African biblical scholars that we have today are trained in Western institutions, where they were trained with Eurocentric approaches to biblical studies. Although one appreciates the opportunity to study in many great Western institutions, one thing is certain, the overseas training in biblical studies and theology is one of the ways by which Old Testament scholars have been colonized. By the time we graduated we became expert Eurocentric interpreters of the Bible. By the time we came back to our institutions at home, we spread the good news of Eurocentric biblical interpretation. We taught pastors, priests and other leaders in the church the Eurocentric approaches and these pastors, priests and leaders passed them to their congregations. All the pastors, priests, their congregations, other leaders and biblical teachers became colonized with Eurocentric methods of biblical interpretation.

Another major means of colonization of Old Testament teaching is the absolute domination in the field of biblical studies by western

scholars. Eurocentric scholars who write eurocentrically write most Old Testament commentaries, Old Testament introductions, Bible atlases, histories of ancient Israel, and they are also responsible for most of the bible translations that we use in our higher institutions. Not only are they Eurocentric in their approach to Old Testament scholarship and teaching, they feverishly attempt to de-Africanize the Bible. Yet, that is what we read and consume in our universities and seminaries. These authors write with untold scholastic prejudice and hold tenaciously to the conception that the western methods of Old Testament interpretation are “the” interpretation: superior and universal. This has also led to the use of Eurocentric criteria as a yardstick for judging all Africentric materials. For example I sent an article on the African presence in the Bible to a reputable journal, and in return, I was accused of trying to “smuggle Africa and Africans into the Bible.”

Ways to decolonize the teaching of the Old Testament in Africa

From what has been discussed above I will discuss some ways the teaching of the Old Testament may be decolonized in Africa.

a) Planning a curriculum that reflects African perspectives

In our teaching of the Old Testament in African universities and seminaries, there is an urgent need to plan a curriculum that reflects African culture and religion. I do not advocate for a total negation of some basic Western Old Testament courses in Old Testament. But the following courses should be included in any Old Testament curriculum in African universities and seminaries:

African and Africans in the Old Testament:

This is the examination of the references to African individuals and peoples referred to throughout the pages of the Old Testament. Such a course should go beyond mere presence, but also include the religious, political, military, and economic contributions of Africa and Africans in the Old Testament period.⁸

The history of ancient Israel from an African perspective:

As discussed above, the majority, if not all the textbooks on the history of ancient Israel are Eurocentric in their approaches and written in such a way that they legitimize Western culture. These textbooks are

suspects because they were written to de-Africanize the Bible. There is, accordingly, a need to teach the history of Israel from an African perspective. Such a subject should reflect the presence and contributions of Africa and Africans in the history and life of ancient Israel. The ancient biblical people never had prejudice against African people. Prejudice against African people is a modern invention.

An introduction to the Old Testament from an African perspective:

Teaching introduction to the Old Testament from an African perspective involves not only the teaching of the critical theories and approaches to the Old Testament that have been developed in Western contexts, it also includes the contributions of Africans in those early days of the study of Old Testament, especially the early church fathers, for example their contributions to the canonization or the formation of the Old Testament.

African cultural hermeneutics:

This is an interpretation of the Old Testament that proceeds from African culture. African cultural hermeneutics is an Old Testament interpretation that makes the African social and cultural context a subject of interpretation.⁹ Specifically, it means that the Old Testament text is analysed from the perspectives of African world-view and culture.¹⁰ It is the rereading of the Old Testament scripture from a premeditatedly Africentric perspective.

b) Teaching the Old Testament from African culture and religion

This includes what I have described above as African cultural hermeneutics. The purpose is not only to understand the Bible and God in our African experience and culture, but also to break the hermeneutical hegemony and ideological stranglehold that Eurocentric biblical scholars have long enjoyed.¹¹ This is a methodology that reappraises ancient biblical tradition and African world-view, culture, and life experience with the purpose of correcting the effect of the ideological conditioning to which Africa and Africans have been subjected. This methodology includes Africa and Africans-in-the Bible, the Bible as power, reading the Bible with ordinary readers, and inculturation hermeneutics and others.

In this case I may be accused of being biased. But a casual glance at the history of biblical hermeneutics will reveal that there has never been interpretation that have been without references to or dependent

on a particular cultural codes, thought patterns, or social locations of the interpreters.¹² There is no individual who is completely detached from everything in his or her environment or experience and culture so as to be able to render one hundred percent objectivity in everything done. The fact is that every interpreter is biased in some ways.

c) Writing textbooks that reflect African perspectives

As discussed above, most of the books we use as textbooks, including major commentaries, introductions to the Old Testament, histories of ancient Israel, and others are written by Eurocentric scholars with Eurocentric approaches. It is time for scholars and teachers of Old Testament to write textbooks that reflect African culture and tradition. In our teaching, those Eurocentric books that we call “classics” should become supplements to Africentric books used in the classrooms. I have taken this challenge seriously and I have published and edited a few books that reflect African perspectives, and these books may be used as textbooks in African universities and seminaries.¹³ It is time for us to cooperate with one another to write such books.

d) Comparative study of African and Old Testament culture and religions

The field of western comparative biblical studies has been dominated by the comparison of biblical material with the culture and religion of the Ancient Near East. African Old Testament comparative studies include a comparison of the biblical material and material from the Ancient Near East. Still, the emphasis and concentration is on African culture and religion, such as African literature, African archaeology, and the entirety of African tradition. It includes some elements of critical evaluation of both African culture and the Old Testament. After comparing African culture and Christianity or the Old Testament, the relevance of African culture to the study of the Old Testament or the relevance of the Old Testament to African culture is added to the comparison. Substantial research has been done in this area.¹⁴

Conclusion

What I have done in this article is to discuss briefly how the teaching of the Old Testament in Africa has been colonized. Further, I have outlined

various ways to decolonize this teaching of the Old Testament. The ways to decolonize such teaching are (1) the planning of a curriculum that reflects African perspectives; (2) the development of teaching approaches that reflect real African needs, rather than academic studies for academia's own sake; (3) the writing of textbooks that reflect African perspectives; and (4) a focusing on comparative approaches to African culture and religion in relation to Old Testament culture and religion. This is necessary and urgent for African Old Testament scholars and teachers, as there is a need to appreciate the Old Testament in the light of our African heritage.

Footnotes

- 1) Cf. D.T. Adamo, *Decolonizing African Biblical Studies*. 7th Inaugural Lecture of Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria, 10th June 2004.
- 2) Cf. M. Parenti, *Against Empire*. San Francisco: City Lights Books (1995) 18-35.
- 3) Cf. R.S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2001) 61-73.
- 4) Cf. K. Holter, *Yahweh in Africa: Essays on Africa and the Old Testament*. New York: Peter Lang (2000) 10-11 (Bible and Theology in Africa, 1)
- 5) Cf. Holter, *Yahweh in Africa*, 15.
- 6) Cf. Holter, *Yahweh in Africa*, 15-16.
- 7) Cf. Holter, *Yahweh in Africa*, 16. Cf. also J.S. Ukpong, "Rereading the Bible with African eyes", *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 91 (1995) 3-14; and S.O. Abogunrin, "Biblical research in Africa: The task ahead," *Africa Journal of Biblical Studies* 1/1 (1986) 13.
- 8) Cf. my book *Africa and Africans in the Old Testament*. San Francisco: Christian Universities Press, 1998.
- 9) Cf. D.T. Adamo, *Reading and Interpreting the Bible in African Indigenous Churches*. Eugene, Oregon: WIPF and Stock Publishers, 2001; *idem*, "African Cultural Hermeneutics", R.S. Sugirtharajah (ed.), *Vernacular Hermeneutics*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press (1999) 5; J.S. Ukpong, "Inculturation hermeneutics: An African approach to biblical interpretation", W. Dietrich & U. Luz (eds.), *The Bible in A World Context: An Experiment in Contextual Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge: Eerdmans (2002) 17-32.
- 10) Cf. D.T. Adamo, *Explorations in African Biblical Studies*. Eugene, Oregon: WIPF and Stock Publishers (2001) 6.

- 11) Cf. D.T. Adamo, *Explorations in African Biblical Studies* (2001). G.L. Yorke calls this an “Afrocentric Hermeneutics”, which is very legitimate since all interpretations and theologies are perspectival; cf. his “Biblical Hermeneutics: an Afrocentric perspective,” *Journal of Religion and Theology* 2/II (1995) 145-158.
- 12) Cf. G. Mulrain, “Hermeneutics within a Caribbean Context,” R.S. Sugirtharajah (ed.), *Vernacular Hermeneutics*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press (1999) 116-132.
- 13) Cf. my books *Explorations in African Biblical Studies* (2001), and *Reading and Interpreting the Bible in African Indigenous Churches* (2001).
- 14) Cf. D.T. Adamo, “Understanding the Genesis creation account in an African background”, *Caribbean Journal of Religious Studies* 10 (1989) 17-25; *idem*, Deuteronomic conception of God according to Deuteronomy 6:4 and its importance in African context”, *Bible Bashayam* (1992) 55-64; cf. also several of the articles in H. Kinoti & J. Waliggo (eds.), *The Bible in African Christianity*. Nairobi, Kenya: Acton Press, 1997).

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Conference report:

Bible interpretation and translation in Africa **University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, September 2005**

Gosnell L. Yorke

The year 1999 was an important one in relation to the historic interdisciplinary, pan-African and international conference held at the University of Kwazulu-Natal (UKZN), September 19-23, 2005. The first reason why the year 1999 is of such significance is that, in April, Professor Tinyiko Maluleke, a Christian theologian and missiologist, and now the Deputy Executive Dean of the College of Human Sciences at the University of South Africa (UNISA), was invited to address us in Pretoria as a group (about 30 of us) at our annual Consultation. We were mostly United Bible Societies (UBS) Translation Consultants serving in the Africa Area at the time. The second reason is that, in August of that year (1999), the Society for the Study of the New Testament (*Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas*—SNTS) held its first annual meeting in Africa. Those meetings were held at the University of Pretoria (UP) and followed immediately by a post-SNTS conference held at the Hamanskraal campus of UP. The post-conference attracted both African biblical scholars (OT and NT) and Christian theologians. UBS (Africa Area) also had a strong contingent of eight Translation Consultants and conducted a panel discussion, moderated by the present reporter.

From the UBS side, both events in 1999 mentioned above were driven by the fundamental conviction that there is a long-overdue need in Africa to bring African biblical scholars, theologians and translation personnel together to share an academic forum where they can engage each other in dialogue and even debate regarding matters of common concern and, ultimately, for the benefit of both Bible translation and theological education on the continent as a whole.

Writing in another context, the present reporter, among several others, had reason to bemoan the fact that, heretofore, there has been little or no meaningful and prolonged interaction between the African theologian and translator; cf. Gosnell L. Yorke and Peter M. Renju (eds.), *Bible Translation and African Languages*. Nairobi, Kenya: Acton Publishers (2004) 2-4. One of the notable ironies of the modern history of the church in Africa is that this lack of serious engagement as between

the two inter-related disciplines of African theology and Bible translation transpired at exactly the same time during which we find, on the one hand, the proliferation of mission schools and seminaries, Bible colleges and institutes, and even Religious Studies Departments in state and private universities across the continent and, on the other hand, the concurrent proliferation of projects for translating the Bible into a number of the approximately 2000 languages in Africa. More often than not, and even when the National Bible Society (NBS) has already published the Bible (or a NT) in the applicable indigenous African language, we find that the African theologian has tended to give short shrift to that NBS publication. For the most part, the basis for theological formation, reflection and teaching in Africa has been (and, to a large extent, continues to be) based on Bibles published in various European languages—be it English, French, Portuguese or Spanish. And this is true even among those outstanding African theologians supposedly committed to the grounding of the gospel in the African soul and soil; to the commendable programme of contextualization or inculturation against the backdrop of issues such as land dispossession, the ongoing pauperization of the people of the continent, neo-colonialism and globalization.

The September 2005 conference: The make-up of its participants

Thanks to the organizers of the annual meeting of the Old Testament Society of South Africa (OTSSA) and the Society for Ancient Near Eastern Studies (SASNES), we were able to hold our first-ever interdisciplinary, pan-African and international conference. It was held at the same time and venue as the OTSSA/SASNES meetings, namely, September 19-23, 2005 and at UKZN with Professor Gerald O. West serving as our very competent host. The conference attracted African biblical scholars, theologians, linguists and translation personnel not only from across the continent but from both Europe and North America as well, including the editor of BOTSA. And to give practical effect to the UBS concern and fundamental conviction mentioned above, a three-member Steering Committee was established prior to the conference under the leadership of Professor Christo van der Merwe, Director of the Centre for Bible Interpretation and Translation in Africa at Stellenbosch University (SU); a Centre which facilitated greatly the overall logistics in terms of the Bible translation component of the conference such as issuing the Call for Papers, vetting the various Abstracts received as a

result, and appointing Chairs for the various sessions. The other two members were Dr Ernst Wendland, UBS Translation Consultant based in Zambia and an Adjunct Professor at SU; and the present reporter, UBS Translation Consultant and Professor Extraordinarius in the Department of NT at UNISA. Credit should also be given to Dr Aloo Mojola, the Africa Area Coordinator (ATCO) of Bible translation for UBS for giving the present reporter his full support and encouragement as he (the reporter) was asked to explore, for more than two years, how best to bring about a conference of this kind.

And at the conference itself, some of the many interesting and informative papers read included the following from the SASNES Section: a) "Origin and Identity: Re-reading Exodus as a Polemical Narrative then (Palestine) and now (Africa)" (Professor Hendrik Bosman); and b) Various Colloquia such as "Challenging Female Embodiment: Wisdom, Law and Text" (in two sessions). From the OTSSA Section, we had, for example, a) "Decolonizing the Teaching of the Old Testament in Africa" (Professor David Adamo); b) "Interpreting Solomon in Africa: A Postcolonial Perspective" (Professor Knut Holter) and c) "Teaching the Old Testament in Africa" (in two sessions).

In addition to the several excellent SASNES, OTSSA and translation papers read in parallel and other sessions, there were also a number of integrated plenaries at which issues from all three disciplines were aired and discussed in an open forum. Mention should be made, for example, of the Van Selm Memorial Lecture given by Professor Johann Cook: "Reconsidering Septuagintal Origins". And in terms of translation, we had both Dr Ronnie Sim from the Nairobi Evangelical School of Theology (NEGST): "Which Academic Disciplines Concern Bible translation in Africa, and How?", and Dr Aloo Mojola: "What are the Outstanding Problems and Challenges that confront Contemporary Bible Interpretation and Translation in Africa?" Perhaps, it is not inappropriate that I also mention, in passing, that all nine UBS Translation Consultants in attendance read papers at the conference as well. From the side of African theology, we had Professor Maluleke: "The Next Phase in Vernacular Bible Discourse: Echoes from Hamanskraal". And not to be left unmentioned is the integrated plenary at which we had both Professor Isabel Phiri, the first woman Chair of the Department of Theology at UKZN, and Professor Jesse Mugambi of the University of Nairobi and Professor Extraordinarius at UNISA as well. The title of Phiri's presentation was: "African Women theologians talk to African Biblical scholars and Bible translators"; and that of Mugambi was: "Some Problems of Authority in Biblical Interpretation."

I would be remiss if mention is not made of the fact as well that, at the conference, we had not only much memorable food for thought but much food for elsewhere as well. The lunches and evening meals in the University Club were both nutritious and delicious.

Plans for the future

It is our hope that, in spite of the real and, at times, seemingly overwhelming financial and other challenges facing the continent, that ways will be found to make this interdisciplinary, pan-African and international gathering a well-established tradition in Africa. During the closing session of the conference, for example, Dr Louis Jonker, Secretary of the OTSSA, gave expression to the silent thoughts, hopes and dreams of many of us, namely, that what we have begun so well will be continued in one form or another—perhaps next time, with a more focused concentration on a particular Biblical passage(s) which we can then all translate coming from our very different disciplinary perspectives and then “comparing notes”; discussing and even debating among ourselves about the intricacies of Bible translation, as we commit ourselves to the improvement in quality of both African theology and Bible translation in Africa.

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Conference report:

Le 12^{ème} Congrès de l'APECA **Centre Catholique Nganda, Kinshasa, R.D. Congo, Septembre 2005**

Jean-Bosco Matand Bulembat

Le 12^{ème} Congrès de l'Association Panafricaine des Exégètes Catholiques (APECA) a eu lieu au Centre Catholique Nganda, à Kinshasa, République Démocratique du Congo, du 4 au 10 septembre 2005. Le thème a été : *Sagesse humaine et sagesse divine dans la Bible. Lectures africaines de la Bible dans le contexte de l'Eglise Famille de Dieu en Afrique*. Le Congrès commémorait le 40^{ème} anniversaire de *Dei Verbum*, et se tenait en l'honneur de son Excellence Mgr Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya, archevêque de Kisangani, membre inspirateur et fondateur de l'APECA, pour célébrer son jubilé d'argent d'ordination épiscopale. Les congressistes étaient une cinquantaine, provenant de neuf pays : Afrique du Sud, Bénin, Burkina Faso, Cameroun, Congo démocratique, Etats-Unis, France, Nigeria et Tchad.

La messe d'ouverture fut célébrée le dimanche 4 septembre 2005 dans l'Eglise paroissiale Saint-Albert, sous la présidence de Mgr Laurent Monsengwo. L'homélie fut prononcée par Mgr Cornelius Esua, archevêque coadjuteur de Bamenda et président de l'APECA. Les sessions ont commencé le lundi 5 septembre par des cérémonies d'ouverture. En tout, vingt-cinq conférences ont été données, suivies chaque fois de débats fort critiques et constructifs. Deux ont été centrés sur l'impact de *Dei Verbum* dans la lecture critique ou ordinaire de la Bible en Afrique (Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya, *Le SCEAM et l'apostolat biblique en Afrique* et Paul Decock, *The Bible in the Life of the Church in the South African Context*). Après ces conférences d'ouverture, l'identité et la spécificité, le contenu et le sens de la réalité 'sagesse' ont fait l'objet de plusieurs études à partir de différents textes des deux Testaments, des milieux environnant leur genèse ou des milieux de leur réception.

Dans le cadre de l'Ancien Testament, neuf intervenants ont présenté les fruits de leurs recherches (Albert Mundeke Ngengi, *Abraham le sage: des implications théologico-anthropologiques de la fraternité en Gn 13*; Donatien Tshidibi Bambila, *La Sagesse royale mise à l'épreuve. Lecture de 2 S 14*; Jean-Claude Bantu, *Le jugement de Salomon en 1 R 3,16-28*; Mary Jerome Obiorah, *My Mouth Will Speak Words of Wisdom": The Voice of Wisdom in Psalm 49*; Bernard Fansaka, *Ps 1; 19; 119 comme*

relectures sapientiellles de la Torah: Herméneutique et inculturation; Emmanuel O. Nwaoru, *Image of the Woman of Substance in Proverbs 31 :10-31 and African Context*; Patrick Adeso, *Suffering in Job and in an African Perspective*; Ghislain Tshikendwa, *De l'épreuve à la Sagesse. Le livre de Job lu par un Africain*, et Kaobo Amisi, *Sagesse et guerres de libération. Quelle sagesse dans 1 Maccabées pour l'Afrique d'aujourd'hui ?*). Dans ce même cadre, deux conférenciers ont exposé l'histoire de la réception de deux textes bibliques vétérotestamentaires en milieux africains, antique ou moderne (Grant LeMarquand, *The Queen of Sheba and Solomon's Wisdom: A Biblical Story in Ethiopian Tradition* et Roger Wawa, "Binso bizali se mpamba". Réception de Qo 1,2 en contexte africain).

Dans le cadre du Nouveau Testament, on a entendu dix orateurs (Anthony Umoren, *Jesus the Sage : Elements of Ancient Rhetoric and Wisdom in the Sermon on the Mount [Matt 5-7]*; Teresa Okure, "Wisdom is Justified by her Deeds". *The Challenge of Mt 11:19 for the Church in Africa*; Jean-Claude Loba-Mkole, *Sagesse du Fils de l'homme en Mc 2,10.28*; Paul Marie Buetubela, *Quelle sagesse lui a été donnée ? [Mc 6,2]*; Ukachukwu C. Manus, *Jesus, Prophet of the Sophia-God of the Downtrodden: Rereading the Q-Wisdom Sayings in the Context of HIV/AIDS Pandemic in Africa*; Jean-Bosco Matand Bulembat, « Ô profondeur de la Sagesse de Dieu! » [Rm 11,33]: Ô profondeur de la richesse d'une doxologie; Camillus Umoh, *God's Foolishness and the Paradox of Christian Vocation: Reading 1 Cor 1:26-31 from an African Context*; Margaret Umeagudosu, *The Relevance of Wisdom Christology [1 Cor 1:10-4:21] for the Church as Family of God in Africa*; Sébastien Sangbako Djima, *Arrière-fond grec de 1 Co 9,1-18*; Wilfrid Okambawa, *Le message de sagesse comme don de l'Esprit [1 Co 12,8]*).

N'ont pas été négligées dans la plupart des études les questions de comparativisme religieux entre la sagesse d'Israël et celle des peuples environnants au moment de la génération de celle-là ou entre la sagesse biblique en général et celle des peuples auxquels l'Évangile est annoncé aujourd'hui. Deux ont été des conférenciers qui ont particulièrement aidé à voir en quels termes poser lesdites questions (Marcel Sigrist, *Sagesse babylonienne* et Moïse A. Adekambi, *Paroles de révélation et paroles de sagesse dans les cultures du Fa*).

Faute de temps, deux textes envoyés au congrès par leurs auteurs empêchés n'ont pas pu être lus (Bernard Nsayi, *La sagesse selon 1 Co 1,17-31* et André Kabasele Mukenge, *La sagesse, où la trouver ? Jb 28 dans une herméneutique interculturelle*).

Il s'est dégagé de l'ensemble des études que la sagesse est une réalité polysémique et polymorphe qui exige la perspicacité d'esprit si l'on veut identifier sa nature dans chaque contexte de l'emploi ou de l'absence de l'emploi des termes qui lui sont relatifs. Humaine, elle peut être facilement confondue avec la ruse, l'habileté, la profondeur de l'intelligence ou de la connaissance, l'art d'orchestrer ou de contrôler les événements et les hommes; elle peut donc être pratique ou théorique, morale ou scientifique. Divine, elle renvoie principalement à la maîtrise que Dieu a manifestée en créant toutes choses, en les programmant selon une économie insondable par les humains ; elle renvoie donc à la majesté de la connaissance que Dieu a, depuis toute éternité, de la succession de tous événements dans l'univers, et en fin de compte au mystère de son plan de salut, dont son Fils, Jésus le Christ, est venu apporter et réaliser la pleine révélation, dans ses dires et ses gestes, particulièrement dans sa mort et sa résurrection. L'homme qui comprend un peu la sagesse de Dieu est celui qui la demande dans la prière ; l'insensé s'enorgueillit de sa propre sagesse et considère la sagesse divine comme folie. Il ne fait aucun doute que la publication de ces études étanchera la soif et satisfera la curiosité d'un grand nombre de chercheurs qui veulent en savoir plus.

Ces moments d'intenses débats intellectuels furent agrémentés de détente. De même, trois grandes réunions d'affaires évaluèrent la vie de l'APECA : la première jeta un regard rétrospectif sur le 11^{ème} congrès qui se tint au Caire ; la deuxième, qui rassembla uniquement les membres effectifs, examina les statuts (notamment l'article 5) et les candidatures des nouveaux membres ; la troisième fut une assemblée générale : on y annonça l'admission de nouveaux membres et la révision de l'article 5 des statuts avec l'ajout de la catégorie de « membres associés » pour ouvrir l'association aux exégètes d'autres communautés chrétiennes. Il a été décidé que le prochain congrès aura pour thème *Pauvreté et Richesse dans la Bible* ; il se tiendra en Afrique du Sud, l'Ouganda et l'Ethiopie ayant été retenus comme solutions de rechange. La séance de clôture eut lieu le samedi 10 septembre 2005. L'APECA remercie de tout cœur tous les bienfaiteurs qui lui permettent chaque fois de s'acquitter convenablement de sa vocation.

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Conference report:

African Biblical Hermeneutics **Society of Biblical Literature, Philadelphia, USA, November 2005**

Elelwani Bethuel Farisani

The 2005 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature and American Academy of Religion was held in Philadelphia, 19-22 November. I attended two sessions of the African Biblical Hermeneutics Section, organized by Musa W. Dube, and here follows a brief report.

The first session's theme was Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation/s of the Bible: A Dialogue. This session featured panelists who critically engaged with Musa W. Dube's *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, published by Chalice in 2000. The panelists demonstrated how Dube's book challenges and contributes to the current Two-Thirds World, postcolonial, and feminist biblical discourse of liberation.¹

The second session's theme was Modes of Social Engagement in Biblical Scholarships. I was one of the five presenters at this session. The first presentation was called Biblical Hermeneutics and "Social Engagement" in the work of Itumeleng Mosala. This was led by Edward Antonio from Iliff School of Theology. The second was by Sarojini Nadar from the University of Kwazulu-Natal, entitled Gerald West's Biblical Hermeneutics and Social Engagement. The third presentation was by Emmanuel Katongole from Duke University. His presentation was titled Embodied and Embodying Hermeneutics of Life in the Academy: Musa W. Dube's HIV/AIDS Work. The fourth presentation was by Andrew Mbuvi, also from Duke University, entitled The African Novel: An Unlikely Source for African Theology? And, finally, my presentation was on Mugambi's use of Ezra-Nehemiah in a quest for an African theology of reconstruction.

My presentation was in three stages. Stage one's focus was on outlining both Mugambi's theology of reconstruction and how he uses Ezra-Nehemiah in his theology.² In stage two the focus was on other scholars's critique on Mugambi's reconstruction theology. Specifically, I discussed Tinyiko Maluleke³ and Musa W. Dube's⁴ critique of Mugambi's reconstruction theology. Furthermore, I also provided my critique of Mugambi's proposal concerning Ezra-Nehemiah. Stage three focused on how Ezra-Nehemiah could be used in social engagements in Africa. The paper proposed several steps to be followed here. First, there

is a need to identify the ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah,⁵ which tends to favour one group over against another, in a conflict over who should lead the reconstruction process in Jerusalem after the return of exiles from Babylon, in 539 B.C. Secondly, having identified such an ideology, we will have to engage in a sociological analysis of this ideology. And finally, the paper proposed an ideologically aware reading of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah. This reading will tend to read the Ezra-Nehemiah text against the grain, namely retrieving the silenced voice of the *am ha'aretz*.⁶

Footnotes

- 1) The following panelists participated at this session: Steed Davidson, Union Theological Seminary; Yak-Hwee Tan, Trinity Theological College, Singapore; Jeremy Punt, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa; Nienke Pruijsma, Theologische Universiteit Kampen; and Musa Dube was a respondent.
- 2) Cf. J.N.K. Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction*. Nairobi: East Africa Educational Publishers, 1995; M.N. Getui & E.A. Obeng (eds.) *Theology of reconstruction*. Nairobi: Acton, 1999; J.N.K. Mugambi, *Christian Theology and Social Reconstruction*. Nairobi: Acton, 2003.
- 3) Cf. T.S. Maluleke, "The Proposal for a Theology of Reconstruction: A Critical Appraisal", *Missionalia* 22 (1994) 245-258.
- 4) Cf. M.W. Dube, "Jesse Mugambi is calling us to move from liberation to reconstruction! A postcolonial feminist response", unpublished conference paper; M.W. Dube, "Let us change our gears! Ethical considerations in the HIV and AIDS struggle", paper presented at the 8th General Assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches, held in Cameroon Yaunde, 20-27, November 2003.
- 5) Cf. E. Farisani, "The ideologically biased use of Ezra-Nehemiah in a quest for an African theology of reconstruction" *Old Testament Essays* 15 (2002) 628-646; E. Farisani, "The use of Ezra-Nehemiah in a quest for an African theology of reconstruction", *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 116 (2003) 27-50.
- 6) When one reads Ezra-Nehemiah, one immediately detects a contestation between the returned exiles and the *am ha'aretz*. By the returned exiles here we are referring to all the Jews who were taken into exile by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C., and returned back home with the assistance of the Persian king Cyrus in 539 B.C. The *am ha'aretz* are those Jews who did not go into Babylonian exile but stayed in Palestine.

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Book reviews

Peter Damiam Akpunonu, *The Overture of the Book of Consolations (Isaiah 40:1-11)*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2004. ISBN 0-8204-6778-2. xiii + 166 pp. US\$ 57,95.

Peter Damiam Akpunonu, a Roman Catholic priest from Nigeria, belonged to the first handful of African scholars to complete a doctorate in Old Testament, with a thesis on Isaiah 40-55 at the Urbanian Pontifical University (Rome) back in 1971. After this he has served in various capacities in Nigerian theological institutions, including nearly a decade as rector of the prestigious Catholic Institute of West Africa, in Port Harcourt. At present he is professor of biblical studies at the University of St. Mary of the Lake, Illinois. Accordingly, professor Akpunonu is one of the deans of African Old Testament studies, and the present book should be met with interest, as it follows up his more than 35 years of interest for Isaiah 40-55.

The book is a detailed analysis of the first eleven verses of Isaiah 40, and its focus is to show how these verses anticipate the major theological lines of the following chapters 40-55 in the Book of Isaiah. After a brief survey of the historical context (the Babylonian exile), follows a study of the literary style of Isaiah 40-55. Then comes the more direct focus on the first eleven verses of Isaiah 40, from thematic and exegetical perspectives. The reader will find a number of interesting details in this close reading of Isaiah 40:1-11. However, the reader will probably be quite disappointed to find that the book is somewhat outdated with regard to the scholarly discussion of this text in particular and of Isaiah in general. Although there are a few references to scholarly contributions from the last decade, most of the discussion reflects the research situation in the 1960s and 70s, rather than that of today. And this is a pity, as Isaiah 40:1-11 plays a major role in the more recent acknowledgement of the literary unity of the Book of Isaiah. Nevertheless, the publishing of this book should be noticed, as it reflects the growing tendency of seeing African Old Testament scholars publishing research contributions on a monograph level.

Knut Holter

Peter Damiam Akpunonu, *The Vine, Israel and the Church*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2004 (Studies in Biblical Literature, vol. 51). ISBN 0-8204-6160-1. xiv + 228 pp. US\$ 64,95.

Peter Damiam Akpunonu, a Roman Catholic priest from Nigeria, has served in various capacities in Nigerian theological institutions, including nearly a decade as rector of the prestigious Catholic Institute of West Africa, in Port Harcourt. At present he is professor of biblical studies at the University of St. Mary of the Lake, Illinois.

The present book offers a thematic study of the vine motif, throughout the Old and New Testament. After an introductory chapter on vine and viticulture in Israel and the Ancient Near East, follow chapters on the major texts, such as Isaiah 5:1-7 (Canticle of the Vine), Psalm 80 (God's vineyard), Matthew 21:33-44 (Parable of the tenants), and John 15:1-8 (Jesus as the true vine). In each case he goes meticulously into the textual material, discussing relevant introductory questions as well as making detailed exegetical analysis. In conclusion there are two chapters discussing Israel (Old Testament) and the church (New Testament) as Vine. The topic is important, not only for exegetical but even more for ecclesiological studies. The book is therefore a welcome contribution from a senior member of the guild of biblical studies in Africa, although one perhaps would have wanted more interaction between the analysis of the Old and New Testament texts. Many of us are probably also somewhat puzzled to see how the author tends to identify the New Testament church with one particular denomination, namely the Roman Catholic church (cf. especially the epilogue in pp. 199-200). Still, the book is recommended for postgraduate contexts.

Knut Holter

Innocent Himbaza, *Le Décalogue et l'histoire du texte: Etudes des formes textuelles du Décalogue et leur implications dans l'histoire du texte de l'Ancien Testament*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Fribourg: Academic Press, 2004 (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis; 207). xiii + 354 pp. ISBN 3-525-53065-X / 3-7278-1496-9. Euro 76,00.

Dr Innocent Himbaza (b. 1965) comes from Rwanda, but lives in Fribourg, Switzerland. He is presently working for the *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* Project, which prepares a new scientific edition of the Hebrew

Bible, eventually to replace the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. In addition to articles in (mostly Western-based) scholarly journals, Dr Himbaza has previously published a monograph (his Fribourg doctoral thesis) on bible translation in Rwanda (cf. *Bulletin for Old Testament Studies in Africa* 11 (2001) 24). The present work, which is a Fribourg *Habilitationsschrift*, is an analysis of the textual history of the Decalogue. And let it be pointed out at once: this is the most detailed analysis ever published on the textual history of the Decalogue, and it is a work that will be a standard reference for decades. Although the Decalogue has indeed received its share of scholarly attention in recent years, also as far as textual criticism is concerned, Himbaza goes both broader and deeper into the material than what his predecessors have done. Broader, in the sense that he not only analyses the two Masoretic versions of the Decalogue (Exod 20:2-17 and Deut 5:6-22) and some more or less accidental examples from other sources, but includes a more or less complete spectre of non-Masoretic Hebrew manuscripts as well as ancient translations. And deeper, in the sense that he not only surveys these other sources – such as (1) the Qumran, Samaritan and Papyrus Nash Hebrew manuscripts, (2) the Greek, Aramaic, Syriac and Latin translations, and (3) the Jewish (Philo Alexandrinus, Josephus, Talmud, etc.) and Christian (New Testament, Church fathers) sources – but openmindedly draws them into the discussion.

It is obviously difficult to summarise a book whose *raison d'être* is to provide the guild of textual critics and Decalogue interpreters with such a variety of details. Nevertheless, I would like to briefly mention three results from Dr Himbaza's research. First, he argues that it is possible to see a difference between Egyptian (Hebrew: Papyrus Nash, Greek: Septuagint) and Palestinian (Masoretic and Samaritan) sources; this is a difference that leads him to suggest that the Decalogue actually experienced cases of local textual evolutions. Secondly, he is critical to the various modern attempts at reconstructing a possible original Decalogue consisting of ten short prohibitions; this can hardly be more than quite vague speculations, he argues. And thirdly, he claims that it is impossible to explain the textual varieties of the Decalogue from the perspective of translation difficulties; rather, he holds that different versions of the Decalogue must have existed even before the first translation. This is obviously a book for specialists. Still, libraries that are able (and willing) to build up a pool of source literature for further research – e.g. in textual studies – should try to get hold of a copy.

Knut Holter

Louis C. Jonker & Douglas G. Lawrie (eds.), *Fishing for Jonah (anew): Various approaches to Biblical interpretation*. Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2005 (Study Guides in Religion and Theology; 7. Publications of the University of the Western Cape). i + 265 pp. ISBN: 1-919980-60-1. R 140.00.

In 1992, the South-African scholars Louis C. Jonker, and Douglas G. Lawrie (together with R.A. Arendse and E.M. Conradie) published *Fishing for Jonah: Various approaches to Biblical interpretation* (Bellville: University of the Western Cape). Now, thirteen years later, Jonker and Lawrie are editors of *Fishing for Jonah (anew)*, which contains a number of new chapters and expanded versions of chapters compared to what appeared in the book from 1992. The reader should also be aware that various parts of the previous book, *Fishing for Jonah* (1992) have been further dealt with in *Angling for interpretation* (Conradie & Jonker, 2001), and others will be further dealt with in *Hooked on hermeneutics* (Conradie & Smit, in preparation).

Fishing for Jonah (anew) presents and evaluates a wide range of approaches or “methods” in biblical interpretation, making use of the book of Jonah for illustrations. Altogether, seven scholars contribute in the book. Throughout the eight chapters of the book, the reader is guided all along the history of biblical exegetical approaches. The editors of *Fishing for Jonah (anew)* have categorised the various methodological approaches in biblical studies in the following way: Methods focusing on the production of texts (chapter 4), others focusing on the texts themselves (chapter 5), others focusing on the reception of texts (chapter 6), and others focusing on unconscious psychic and ideological factors (chapter 7). A few practical exercises are included at the end of the book, before an extended bibliography is provided.

In every chapter, several approaches belonging to each category are presented. To each presentation, the approach is exemplified on the book of Jonah, and is then given a critical evaluation. This procedure is followed throughout the book, by all contributors. The various approaches presented and evaluated illustrate in what way each method can contribute to biblical interpretation. By letting each approach show its strengths and weaknesses, this book does not force the reader to choose one approach to the exclusion of others. The last chapter of the book discusses where this situation of methodological plurality leaves the modern interpreter, and indicates a multidimensional interpretation as a promising road to follow. It is argued that such an approach helps the interpreter to avoid exclusivistic claims on the one hand, and the attempt

to construct a scheme that pretends to cover the whole field, on the other hand (p. 236). The editors of *Fishing for Jonah (anew)* are aware that the list of various exegetical approaches dealt with in this book is incomplete. However, the comprehensive presentation and evaluation of each methodological approach discussed, makes *Fishing for Jonah (anew)* important for anyone (student or scholar) who wants to be conscious about the complex process of interpretation, and to reflect critically upon her/his own methodological stance(s).

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W. Pieterse & M. Yele (eds.), *The Book of Ruth: A Translation in English and Pidgin with Clarifying Notes and Articles*. Kumba: Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 2005 [no ISBN]. x + 95 pp. Can be ordered from: Hebrewinkumba@yahoo.com.

The book is the result of the work of a Hebrew translation group in Cameroon, whose participants meet biyearly to translate and interpret Old Testament texts. The participants are graduates from the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Kumba, Cameroon, now serving as pastors in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, and the book illustrates how continued studies after graduation may benefit the church.

The book focuses on the Old Testament book of Ruth, and it consists of three parts. First comes a new translation of Ruth in English, with explanatory – mainly exegetical – footnotes. Then follows a translation in Pidgin English. The translators express the ideal of making concordant translations, and argue that this is actually easier with Pidgin English than with English. The two translations are meant to encourage Bible study sessions in the congregations, and the third part of the book will here be of some help, consisting of seven brief articles on various aspects of Ruth: the notion of the Messiah (F. Asaha), the role of women (A. Chewachong), Ruth as an exemplification of Israel (I. Kongnyuh), the significance of harvest (J. Mbah), the significance of Moab and Bethlehem (M.L. Mgwa), the relationship to Boaz (W. Pieterse), and the concept of the redeemer (M. Yele). Surprisingly, the last article is the only one that explicitly relates Ruth to traditional African culture.

Knut Holter

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